DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 148 120 FL 009 069

AUTHOR	Abe, D.; And Others
TITLE	New Approaches to Autonomy: Two Experiments in Self-Directed Learning. Melanges Pedagogiques, 1975.
INSTITUTION	Nancy Univ., (France). Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pedagogiques en Langues.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	24p.; Contains occasional small type
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Adult Students; Autoinstructional Aids; Autoinstructional Laboratories; *Autoinstructional Programs; College Language Programs; College Students; *English (Second Language); Higher Education; *Independent Study; Individual Study; *Language Instruction; Language Laboratories; *Language Programs; Listening Comprehension; Magnetic Tape Cassettes; Reading Comprehension; *Second Language Learning; Speech Skills; Student Motivation; Tape Recordings; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	France

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses two experiments with autonomous learning strategies for learners studying English as a second language in France, one for non-specialist adults and the other for university students. The first group consisted of 26 adults who were mostly professionals and had opted for autonomy not out of preference but for lack of any other solution. All of the learners who completed the experiment were very highly motivated and had fairly immediate, definite goals to reach. The three skills that were emphasized were written comprehension, oral comprehension, and oral expression, and therefore, a wide selection of both tapes and written material was needed. Learners were able to have "work sessions" with helpers whenever they desired, in which their learning difficulties were reviewed and diagnosed. The most important finding of the experiment was that beginning language learners could survive in an autonomous learning scheme. The other experiment involved engineering students in a school in Nancy. An autonomous program was set up to replace the classroom situation with one which called for a more adult approach and greater involvement. Oral material was used exclusively. It was found that the students for whom enjoyment was the prime motivation for learning English found autonomous learning a positive experience while the completely unmotivated students found it an unsuccessful solution. (CFM)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

ED148120

MELANGES PEDAGOGIQUES 1975

D. ABE, C. HENNER-STANCHINA, P. SMITH

NEW APPROACHES TO AUTONOMY : TWO EXPERIMENTS IN SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

FL009069

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.R.A.P.E.L.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

C.R.A.P.E.L.

« Il ne s'agit plus dans un monde en perpétuelle évolution d'enseigner un contenu, mais les moyens autonomes d'acquisition de ce contenu et surtout l'approche critique qui mettra constamment en cause ce contenu, en le relativisant. C'est pour celui qui étudie la première étape sur le difficile chemin de la liberté d'apprendre. Car... on a jusqu'à présent posé les problèmes pédagogiques en termes d'enseignement et non en termes d'apprentissage .
Les perspectives que la pédagogie rogérienne ouvrent à l'enseignement des langues restent généralement inexplorées. Il faudra dans les années qui viennent expérimenter aussi loin qu'il sera possible dans ce domaine, et à tous les niveaux ».

Y. Châlon

I. INTRODUCTION

What — to the late Yves Châlon, founder of the C.R.A.P.E.L. — represented a prospective view of a pedagogical revolution or " renovation " in 1970, has now become daily practice at the C.R.A.P.E.L.

Our insistence upon differentiating between teaching and learning, and emphasizing the latter, has led us to experiment with strategies that do not teach the need to be taught, but rather give learners the opportunity to reclaim responsibility for and control of their own education. In doing so, we are also investigating the possibilities for an institution to function as a resource centre, an adjunct to a learning process freed from time and place restrictions and institutional management.

It is perhaps unnecessary to reiterate in detail all our justifications for developing autonomous learning strategies for non-specialist adults and students, as they have already been discussed in previous volumes of *Mélanges Pédagogiques*.

The growing need for English in France, people's increasing mobility and wide range of professional and personal commitments, along with the realisation that learning remains a very personal, highly individualised matter, and that most learning, to quote Illich (1970), " is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting ", we are seeking solutions other than the traditional class as an answer to people's needs.

Our experience has brought out the inadequacies of these classes for both adults and students. Our highly motivated adult learners of all ages and back-

grounds are more and more able to define their own needs in functional terms : that is, specify not only the skills they must develop, but the specialised field within which they must become competent, as well as the real situation they will eventually have to deal with. Classes, therefore, may not meet their specific needs and objectives.

Some of our students, on the contrary, know very little about what they will have to do with the English they are forced to learn, and consequently, show little motivation in classroom settings. The introduction of autonomous learning strategies seems a logical alternative solution.

The desire to facilitate self-motivated, self-directed learning also goes hand in hand with our belief in the use of authentic materials. Not only does using authentic materials minimize the transfer problems the learner must eventually face in bridging the gap between " didactic " English and real English, but it ensures easier acquisition of communicative competence, by exposing the learner to natural, real-life communication situations. Moreover, once the learner is exposed to the materials which are readily available to him through the media, he can then exploit his own selection of materials, thereby continuing the learning process independently of any institution.

The idea of learner-centered strategies is now being applied in several different situations in Nancy. Regular evening class adults are being prepared for future autonomous work. English has been introduced on an experimental basis to one prisoner in Nancy ; groups studying English for special purposes have been set up in industry, where the materials consist of authentic, technical documents which have been used to construct didactic exercises.

The aim of this article is to present two distinctly different audiences and sets of circumstances, and to describe how the basic theory of autonomy was implemented and where it diverged in each case.

II. ADULTS

C. Henner-Stanchina

A special type of learner was attracted to our autonomy scheme. Each learner being considered a unique and separate problem, it would be impossible to discuss each one in full detail here. Few of the 26 learners involved opted for autonomy out of personal preference, most learners recognizing their insufficient competence in English as a problem, and accepting the challenge of a more difficult learning experience for lack of any other solution. The learners were mostly professionals — engineers, dentists, doctors, nurses, businessmen, researchers, etc. Some had already attained varying degrees of competence in English, others were absolute beginners. They generally had between 3 months

and 2 years to arrive at a minimum adequate level of competence, psychologically satisfying to them, which would permit them to deal with situations such as directing a factory in Iran or a postal system in Thailand with English-speaking colleagues, participating in a training course on orthodontic techniques in the United States, continuing scientific research and keeping up with the international conferences which so often require a working knowledge of English, working as a Maître d'Hotel in a French restaurant abroad or attending business meetings held by multi-national firms and conducted in English.

All the learners who actually sustained their commitment to autonomy were very highly motivated, and had fairly immediate, definite goals to reach. Although motivation is an internal experience, which cannot be studied or measured directly, its existence can perhaps be inferred from observation of behaviour. It soon became evident that people with good intentions but no immediate goals were not sufficiently motivated, and therefore not suited to autonomy. Three of the learners who abandoned English in autonomy did so precisely because their goals were neither definite nor immediate, and they were not willing to meet the demands of this type of learning. Two others gave up for lack of time to devote to working on English. Only one decided to rearrange his time schedule in order to join an evening class.

Motivation can be seen as a two-fold process, comprising cognitive and emotive motivations : that is, on the one hand, a desire for success associated with professional reward, and on the other hand, a need for personal achievement, self-esteem, and the avoidance of possible failure. People having already met with success in their professional lives, thus having a certain image of their potentialities, feel that their competence is to be assessed by their success in this endeavour. This ego-involvement causes learners to set themselves levels of aspiration and try to live up to their expectations, to their desired " self-ideal " (Rogers, 1970).

Vernon, in her study entitled *Human Motivation* (1969), stated that " people with high achievement motivation tended to prefer tasks which required personal initiative and which presented some difficulty, a challenge rather than the assurance of success. They were willing to postpone immediate reward, and to take moderate risks to attain this. In addition, if the task is one which appeals to their interests or to their pride in their intelligence or professional skill, their level of achievement is higher than if it is merely a spare-time activity or experiment ".

Academic backgrounds may prove an obstacle to self-directed learning, if the learners have been conditioned to view the teacher as a " Guru ", who must be present at all times, assign tasks, set deadlines, test, and evaluate progress, in order for learning to take place. It was, in fact, just these expectations of the traditional teaching-learning process that caused us to decline a proposal to set

up English classes in an organisation in Paris. Having granted us his agreement on the principle of autonomy, the " re-training officer " was unable to have our sheme accepted by the learners, and so the project was dropped.

Objectives

Once the learner realizes that his own learning is reliable, and that, in fact, the " centre of responsibility lies within himself " (Rogers, 1961), he is ready to assume his role in the learning process. One aspect, then, of our short-term objectives is to prepare our learners psychologically for autonomy. The many areas where the teacher may be eliminated are demonstrated, ironically, by the helper. That is, the helper can sample various types of exercises with the learner, showing him how to take advantage of the material's built-in corrections, and encouraging him to trust his own ability to judge and guide his performance.

Even once this has been accomplished, the problems of working alone and of not being forced by any external system of control (testing) or peer-group pressure (often effective in a classroom setting) to furnish a certain amount of work within a given time, or keep up with a group norm, still have to be faced.

Although we did not intend the word *autonomy* necessarily to imply *solitude,* this is nevertheless the most frequent case. Now, if we recognize the fact that adults often measure their performance against that of others, we must allow them to do so, and provide the means wherever possible. We can, for the time being, only resort to talking to them about the problems encountered by other learners in their situation, or put them in contact with each other by telephone, while hoping that despite their totally different time schedules, we will eventually be able to develop some sort of peer-matching system, whereby learners at the same proficiency levels could meet with one another.

As for the refusal of the helper to set the learners' goals and evaluate their progress, we are presently experimenting with the idea of performance contracts. These contracts are drawn up by the learners themselves. Judging by their previous performances, the learners set their levels of aspiration by writing short term, renewable contracts. They may also readjust their levels of aspiration in successive contracts. In this way, it seems, the learners are more motivated, re-motivated each time to live up to their own expectations.

A second short-term objective is to help them attain a minimum adequate level of linguistic competence (Riley, 1974) which will allow them to confront particular communicative situations as learning experiences, or simply to help them maintain the levels of competence already reached.

A third objective is to provide both technical and methodological preparation. The technical preparation entails making sure that the learners are sufficiently skilled in manipulating their tape recorder and cassettes, so that they have a certain freedom vis-à-vis the taped material, and are not so preoccupied with the equipment that they cannot concentrate on the material itself.

The purpose of the methodological preparation is to help people gain an awareness of their own individual learning habits, to give them an idea of how they can use the materials we have supplied, and to expose them to different possibilities for transforming authentic documents into didactic exercises. In this way, the long-term objective can be reached, where the learners define their own goals, study materials they themselves have selected, determine their own pace, discover their mode of learning, monitor their own performance, evaluate their own progress, and all this, without the intervention of a teacher as such.

Material

The organisation of an autonomous learning strategy requires the availability of a great deal of material and equipment. Since the three skills chosen by learners were written comprehension, oral comprehension and oral expression, we needed a wide selection of both tapes and written material. The recordings range from standard evening class courses at all levels (mostly C.R.A.P.E.L. - produced), to " modules " describing particular language functions, to songs, comedy skits, panel discussions, and finally, a corpus of spontaneous, authentic recordings of British or American radio or television programmes and actual conversations.

The written material includes a course in the grammar of written English produced by a C.R.A.P.E.L. project group, a collection of recent magazines and newspapers, and numerous " dossiers " on various topics of either general, or more specialized, technical interest.

All self-access material is designed to facilitate self-directed learning (dictionaries and grammars are recommended for this purpose as well). The instruction sheets, transcriptions, exercises, additional explanations and answer sheets accompanying the oral or written documents provide guidelines for the independent use of the material, train the learner in developing his own problem-solving techniques, and allow him to check his hypotheses against the solutions provided.

In many cases, the learner will provide his own tapes, or printed matter. A work contract, a bulletin describing a new type of machinery, or even a business letter may be studied simultaneously, as just another illustration of how the language functions, as a variation of the " common core " base the learner has acquired in using our material.

As we cannot always foresee the difficulties a learner will experience in working on our materials, the feedback he or she provides becomes an essential part of the reworking process ; modifying the material to make it more explicit, more suitable to independent study, or more interesting for that particular individual.

The quality of the equipment must be reasonably good, in order to ensure accurate reproduction of our tapes, and avoid problems such as tangled cassettes, etc. Since one of the most important steps towards oral expression is comparing one's own production to a taped model, learners usually invest in a tape recorder or a cassette recorder. Cassettes are either lent by the C.R.A.P.E.L., or provided by learners who intend to keep them.

A fast copier for cassettes is absolutely indispensable if the helper is to provide tapes without delay.

Organisation

In the original autonomy scheme outlined in *Mélanges Pédagogiques 1973*, the learner began at a systematic stage ; that is, a more or less traditional classroom situation (4 hours per week) with a teacher, where, using a " common core " beginner's course developed by the C.R.A.P.E.L., he acquired the morpho-syntactic base of the language. He then progressed through non-systematic stages, developing his technical ability, experimenting with different study habits, working semi-autonomously under the guidance of a teacher-counsellor (2 hours per week), using prepared self-access materials relative to his particular set of objectives and geared to train him in self-monitoring and self-evaluation. The aim of this progression was the acquisition of linguistic competence, and the phasing out of traditional teaching and dependence on the classroom as the adults learned to learn themselves.

In the adult autonomous scheme, learners could not be weaned away from any dependence on classroom and teacher, since none of them were able to attend any type of formal class. The lack of any systematic preparation in advance was compensated for not only by their high achievement motivation, but by the nature of the material provided, the work sessions and discussions, and the relationship between helper and learner.

At beginning levels, a higher proportion of (constructed) structured course materials is used, exhibiting, therefore, somewhat less spontaneity and authenticity. However, language functions may be introduced fairly early (and under more natural conditions, as learners are out of the artificial world of the classroom), as well as more authentic recordings.

During the first few work sessions (sometimes more frequent), the emphasis is placed perhaps more on methodology than on content ; the helper suggesting how the material may be used to its fullest advantage, while giving the learners time to experiment with their own personal modes of study. They should be shown how to listen to themselves, by recording their productions and comparing them to the taped model.

These sessions are not at all comparable to private tutoring lessons, as the helper will not assume the learners' responsibilities for them, nor allow the learners to make her more directive, etc. A learner-centered strategy implies that the learners determine their own best working conditions : the most profitable time of day for study, their maximum span of attention or concentration on English, the time they decide to devote to each task or exercise, the degree of perfection they seek (a function of personality), etc.

Even though learners will claim to accomplish more in less time with the helper, and may be discouraged by slow learning, or learning that occurs in spurts rather than in regular patterns, they must understand that only working independently will allow them to develop the learning techniques most effective for them.

The frequency of these work sessions is determined by the learners — and varies from once a week to once every 6 weeks. Although the helper must always be available to see the learners, abuses must be avoided, for sessions that are too frequent leave learners no time to work independently, and may therefore increase their dependence on the helper, and slow down their " autonomisation ".

Whenever learners feel they want to meet with the helper, they can either phone in for an appointment, or simply stop by. In this way, they themselves control the pace at which they work, and are not subject to any external pressures. During the session, learners present their problems, review them with the helper and together they diagnose the learning difficulties. The helper may then produce some supplementary exercises, or suggest additional work to the learner. Especially in the early stages, these learner-helper sessions seem to be of utmost importance. Learners have all said that knowing they could meet with someone influenced their decisions to continue working in autonomy.

Since no direct correlation was found between level of linguistic autonomy and level of pedagogic autonomy, very often a similar concentration on methodology was initially necessary even at the more advanced levels of proficiency, for a more advanced learner linguistically speaking did not necessarily adapt better to his learning responsibilities.

Thus, the same psychological, linguistic, technical and methodological preparations were carried out at more advanced levels. Work sessions were requested, although less frequently than at lower proficiency levels, and the

work accomplished and that yet to be done was discussed. But as the needs of more advanced learners are different from those of beginners, so the helper's functions must be adjusted to meet these needs.

The helper should be able to offer learners a wide choice of authentic materials to demonstrate how they can be exploited, and often, to collaborate with learners in the creation of exercises using such materials. At more advanced levels, too, the helper may act as a sort of matchmaker. Networks similar to what Illich (1970) has termed the " skill exchange " are set up whereby a learner is matched to a native speaker, who has agreed (for a modest fee !) to meet with the learner for informal conversation. Each year the C.R.A.P.E.L. draws up a list of names and addresses and circulates it among learners. When they are ready, they themselves take the initiative to make all further arrangements for meeting. This same system would be very desirable even at beginning levels, if it were not so difficult to realise. Not only are native speakers less interested in socializing with learners who are just beginning, but the learners themselves are reticent, fearful and not yet willing to confront a real communication situation.

At whatever level in the autonomy strategy, the helper's role is to create an atmosphere that is conducive to significant, self-directed learning. The relationship sought in autonomy can be likened to the " helping relationship " described in Rogerian therapy. This analogy is not mere coincidence, since language learning does, to a large extent, imply personality change and growth. In Rogers' terminology (1969) the helper must display " congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy ". In other words, he must accept and be himself, accept and care about the learner, and empathise with his feelings of fear, anticipation and discouragement. The learner who experiences this is less anxious, can deal more effectively with frustration and becomes more self-directing and autonomous.

Evaluation

Part of attaining a certain level of pedagogic autonomy is to acquire the means by which to evaluate one's own performance and progress. Evaluation, then, consists of the learners' more or less subjective views of the savoir-faire they have acquired and the perception of their attainment of self-established goals.

More objective views may be solicited from native speakers having had conversations with the learners, for example, or from the helper, who has followed the learner's evolution and can judge how he or she has progressed. By choice we have not, as yet, given any tests in autonomy. We can only attempt during our meetings with the learners to estimate the learning that has taken place, and hope that the learners' concepions of their acquired competence will match

the helper's impressions. The desired effect here is to emphasize the learning process itself, while eliminating the tensions that accompany a test of final results, as well as the very idea that these results — obtained at a particular moment in time — may be considered final.

In this strategy, any evaluation would not be merely one of linguistic competence ; it would necessarily comprise an evalutation of the learners' abilities to change, to adapt to learning experiences which are, more often than not, fairly new to them. it means, therefore, judging how much they have learned about how they learn, to what extent they have benefited from the materials furnished, how they were able to cope with certain frustrations and tensions, how highly motivated they were, how much time they actually invested, and so on. The final criterion would be to determine, if possible, how this experience carried over into their personal lives, if their methodological preparation and development of learning techniques was indeed applied to other situations. The multiplicity of criteria would seem to make any evaluation on our part extremely difficult, if not impossible.

We hope we have sufficiently prepared our learners so that the final test — which is set by the real-life situation — they have been preparing for, is a successful one.

Conclusion

Ideally, we would be able to follow up each one of our learners, either meeting with them again for discussion upon their return to Nancy, or corresponding with them during their stay abroad, in order to determine how helpful their work in autonomy had been, and how effectively they were able to adjust and function in the context of their particular situation. This, so far, has proven very difficult to carry out, for various reasons — the most obvious being that busy people often have little time to spare for discussions of this type, and even less time to write. Nine learners have either gone abroad or simply left Nancy, and have not remained in contact with us. On the few occasions we were able to reach people and question them, they all expressed dissatisfaction at their performance in English, while holding themselves responsible for not having worked more at English, and at no time hinting that the helper was in any way responsible for their inadequacies. Furthermore, this very feeling of inadequacy served to motivate them even more for future work Thus five learners are continuing in autonomy this year.

We feel that this experiment is an extremely positive one, and although we hesitate to generalise because the numbers are still too small, it is clear that the possibilities for autonomous learning deserve to be explored further. One parti-

cularly encouraging finding is the confirmation of our hypothesis that beginners can, in fact, survive in an autonomous learning scheme. No less than 9 of the total 26 candidates were beginners. We chose, therefore, to re-evaluate the original exclusion of beginners from this strategy, and concentrate on ways of facilitating the learning tasks for the individual starting from scratch. Results proved that given the same conditions and equal motivational factors, autonomy is just as feasible for beginners as for the more advanced.

III. STUDENTS — D. Abé, P. Smith

The people involved in this experiment were engineering students at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Métallurgie et de l'Industrie des Mines (ENSMIM) of Nancy.

English is a compulsory subject[1] during their three years' study for their engineering diploma, and they must attend three or four hours' English classes in groups of twelve, each week, out of approximately twenty-two hours' classes per week (their academic year is about twenty-five weeks long, to which is added a period of training in industry).

The great amount of time alloted to languages, especially English, in the curriculum stems from the generally accepted idea that engineers destined to high positions in industry should have sufficient knowledge of languages to be able to cope with the multilingual situations that they are likely to encounter in their professional life (e.g. reading of scientific texts, meeting representatives of foreign firms, travelling abroad, attending international conferences, etc.). Hence at the ENSMIM the emphasis is laid most of the time on oral practice, though no specific exercises have been geared to particular situations in which they are likely to find themselves, since up to now no investigation has been undertaken on the needs of former students[2].

Because English is compulsory and is in effect considered less important than scientific subjects, the attitude of many students towards it is rather indifferent. Perhaps a more important reason for this attitude in the case of advanced students is that they do not easily feel that they are making any progress, since they are beyond the stage where there are great landmarks to be reached. Probably the most important single cause of indifference, however, is that most students cannot foresee any practical application of their knowledge of English in either the near or the distant future.

[1] Students having a satisfactory level of English when they enter the school can choose to study German or Russian.

[2] We plan to distribute a questionnaire among former students of the ENSMIM this year, to define their real needs in English.

In this situation, then, given the factors alluded to above, — the academic context, the absence of any well-defined objective to be reached, and the consequent lack of motivation on the part of students — it was decided to develop autonomous learning strategies at the ENSMIM of Nancy. This was also in accordance with the growing tendency of the C.R.A.F.E.L. to encourage self-directed learning programmes.

Objectives

In the short-term this establishing of an autonomous learning strategy meant : (i) replacing the classroom situation by a system of study which would be more susceptible of catching their interest, and would call for a more adult approach and greater involvement on their part ;

(ii) providing solutions to the problem of different tastes in material and methods.

However, for financial and practical reasons, the experiment was going to concern only a small number of students in its early stages. The groups of students who had the greatest need of the short-term solutions mentioned above were the more advanced students. For such groups, the linguistic aims to be reached were not so much a question of language acquisition as of reactivation of structures and vocabulary already known to them. Here again the stress was laid on communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence.

In the long-term it was hoped that the students would have acquired a capacity for pedagogic autonomy which would enable them either to maintain their level of English after leaving the ENSMIM or to make a fresh start whenever the demand arose : they would become conscious of the fact that they could dispense with directed learning (evening classes, private lessons, intensive courses, etc.).

Another objective was to examine in what ways the teaching of a language could be adapted to the new formula of " sandwich courses ", as there has been increasing investigation into the possibilities of such a system[3], and also to examine how students could integrate the learning of a language into periods of training in industry.

Material and equipment

The material used during the experiment was intended to resemble as closely as possible the type of material students would have on hand when they were away from the school, either training or working in industry. Written material

[3] See *Colloque sur l'enseignement supérieur en alternance, Rennes 21-22-23 septembre 1973.*

was rejected, however, since the students were already accustomed to using textbooks, magazines and newspapers in French as well as in English, and seemed to have little need for specific training in this area as far as autonomous work was concerned.

Oral material, on the contrary, though easily available through modern communication channels, — the radio, records, etc., — is little used in the various fields of their specialities. Moreover, students are in great awe of oral comprehension and it is necessary to remove the psychological barriers which surround it.

This was done initially through intensive listening to samples of selected recordings, mostly taken from *Cours Avancé de Compréhension Orale* and *Documents de Travail Autonome*[4] with such exercises as general or detailed comprehension questions, full or partial transcriptions, summaries, vocabulary exercises and so on. To repeat and complement the instructions given orally there were scripts, which did not, however, provide solutions to the exercises proposed on the tapes, since we wanted to be able to evaluate both the quantity and the quality of the work the students accomplished.

At a later stage, the material provided consisted only of untouched authentic documents, apart from dictionaries, which were used throughout the experiment.

Once it had been decided to work on oral material, the choice of cassette-players seemed logical, since they are cheap, easy to transport and to use. The ENSMIM provided an initial number of cassette-players, together with cassettes, which were recorded at the college.

Organisation

The experiment was originally limited to one group of the more advanced students in the final year. However, since the degree of autonomy in this stage was fairly limited, the experiment was extended to second year students. In this way the students had one year of semi-autonomous work and in the following year could apply the learning techniques they had acquired. As it stands now, the experiment covers four groups of more advanced students : two in the second and two in the third year.

Stage 1

As we have already mentioned, the initial stage of the experiment was originally centered round the period of industrial training.

[4] Duda and al. « L'exploitation didactique de documents authentiques » in *Mélanges Pédagogiques 1973*.

In the four years preceding their departure, the students were introduced in class to the problems of oral comprehension, and to the various exercises that could be carried out on an oral text. As all the recordings would be extracts of authentic speech, apart from comprehension difficulties due to speed, number of speakers, background noise and intonation, stress, weak forms, etc., one of the most urgent problems encountered by the students was that of accents. Thus the students were asked to work on at least one tape devoted to different sorts of accents. Other cassettes concerned varieties of oral English, such as B.B.C. news, humour, " problem recordings " [5] and songs. So all these different types of texts were touched upon during the preparation period, with the aim of helping the students to choose among the tapes which best suited their abilities and tastes.

During their three weeks' period of industrial training, the students worked on two cassettes, each accompanied by a script.

On returning to the school, the students discussed their work and methods with the teacher, and together they weighed up the advantages and difficulties of individual work.

Results and conclusions

A comparatively small number of students did no work at all on the cassettes. (about 10 %, as compared with 50 % absenteeism from class.).

Two-thirds of the students completed 75 % of the work which had been set and in general they spent more time on the tapes than we had foreseen. They tended to work in long stretches, rather than doing a little each day, as had been suggested. From a subjective point of view the students were satisfied with the kind of work they had achieved and half of them felt that they had improved their oral comprehension.

If one third of the students worked only at the ENSMIM during the few days before the meeting with the teacher, another third did complete their work during the period in industry. The remainder took advantage of their free time during the holidays which followed their period in industry. It may appear that few people seemed to have integrated the learning of the language into the period in industry, but one must not forget that three weeks is very short when compared to the usual length of " sandwich courses " in industry. Moreover, while they were adapting to the cassette system, the students also had problems settling into new jobs and new surroundings, which was very time consuming, but which would not occur in the case of a real " sandwich course ".

[5] These included recordings dealing with background noise, atmospherics, rapid speech, etc.

Apart from this and other material constraints, there were also difficulities inherent in the work-programme itself. The students had been given a series of ten brief recorded texts to work on, each followed by an exercise. This proportion was not found to be satisfactory as it meant that students had to spend more time on general comprehension than would actually have been necessary for the acquisition of autonomous learning techniques. In future this will be rectified by basing several exercises on the same text.

Also, not having access to full transcriptions of the recordings, the students sometimes abandoned an exercise when they could not understand individual words, whether key words or not. While this is a problem which the autonomous learner will always encounter, it seems necessary to include in the preparatory sessions some exercises aimed at helping the student to overcome this difficulty. In addition, the technical quality of both cassettes and cassette-players often left much to be desired.

Despite all these difficulites, the experiment can be considered successful for several reasons : it proved a valid alternative to the classroom situation, student motivation increased, and a certain number of students did work during the period in industry.

However, the students were still by no means fully autonomous : the introduction to the course took place in a normal classroom situation ; the students' own choice was limited to the selection of material made available by the teacher ; it was the teacher who prepared the exercises and again, after working alone on the tapes, the students had to give a full account of their work to the teacher.

Stage 2

Stage 2 is as yet very limited, involving only four students. Their level of English was much higher than that of their fellow-students, and they had completed the first stage a year in advance. They were therefore able to take part in the experiment throughout their final year, which included studies at the ENSMIM and two industrial training periods.

Though the ENSMIM provided the equipment as in the first stage, the students could choose their own material and methods. The situation was now fully learner-orientated, and the role of " teacher " being redefined, the person in charge of the experiment can justly be termed " the helper ".

In a preliminary meeting each student discussed his needs, his specific linguistic difficulties and his interests with the helper. These ranged from reading scientific texts through science-fiction novels and listening to anything from pop records to highly specialised oral comprehension texts. If possible, the learners provided their own material ; otherwise the helper would either indicate where material could be found, or provide a selection from the C.R.A.P.E.L. archives.

The learners then met at intervals with the helper. First there was a joint evaluation of the learner's work, of his exploitation of the material, and of problems encountered, whether concerning language or methods. If the result was considered satisfactory by both learner and helper, the learner would then choose, with the aid of the helper, the material he desired to work on next. Finally, the helper would remind him of the various ways in which he could exploit that particular text, but the actual choice of exercises remained with the learner.

If the result was not considered satisfactory, both helper and learner would attempt to analyse what difficulties had arisen and they could elaborate further exercises.

Results and conclusions

From the outset there were different degrees of motivation. One learner in particular was keenly interested in English and hoped to orientate his career accordingly. He had, in fact, achieved a considerable degree of autonomy in the previous years, as he was one of the rare students who did extra work and had been willing to devote more time and energy to English than the curriculum required. However, he participated in the autonomous group to take advantage of the wider range of material available, and to broaden his scope by acquiring new learning techniques.

Two other learners were less concerned with long term results, preferring to concentrate on more immediate needs, i.e. the English they were exposed to during their leisure time, activities such as listening to records, reading novels, etc.

The last member of the group had the vague intuition that he might need to be able to understand scientific texts in English. This proved, however, to be a very weak conviction, and after the helper mistakenly missed an appointment, he did not respond to the latter's efforts at renewing contact. When interviewed at the end of the year, he argued that, for him, there was no need to practice English regulary, as he would certainly be able to spend some time in England whenever the need to speak English arose. It is difficult to say whether this attitude reflects full autonomy or mere apathy on his part.

The three people who stayed the course, on the other hand, showed great interest in the experiment. Because they had complete freedom of choice, both in the subject to study and in the amount of work to be completed, they felt no external pressures.

They were sufficiently motivated to devote a great deal of their spare time to English, persisting in solving their language problems rather than waiting until they could discuss those problems with the helper. All of them found time to study during the periods of industrial training as well as in the ENSMIM. During the former, the learners had to work on their own, as contact with each other or with the helper was difficult to maintain. Two of them did decide to work together however, while they were studying at the ENSMIM. This decision, taken on their own initiative, was fully approved by the helper, since autonomy is by no means synonymous with isolation. And indeed, they seemed to profit from this cooperation, each complementing the other's knowledge and achieving excellent results, often minimising the need for a helper.

The learners did not find attendance at the meetings onerous since they regarded them as an opportunity for elucidating problems and asking the helper's advice. Together they made an objective assessment of their work. Although at first learners tended to hold back their own opinion until it was confirmed by the helper, they grew progressively more self-confident and independent. This meeting also provided an occasion for them to interact with a native speaker, an opportunity they would not have had otherwise*.

As the helper did not work full-time at the ENSMIM, the time available for meetings with the learners was limited. Consequently the dates of the meetings were not left to the learners alone to decide, but were agreed upon with the helper in advance, and took place about once a month. Although this restricted the learners' initiative to some extent — in the adult scheme referred to earlier, for example, the learner calls on the helper when he wishes — it did have the advantage of avoiding too much dependence on the helper, while at the same time ensuring a certain work rhythm. At times, though, this did have the undesirable result of a feeling of obligation on the part of the learners. On the rare occasions when they did not have time to complete the work agreed upon, they tended to skip work, rather than arrive empty-handed. One assumes that, despite his efforts to combat this attitude, the helper is still considered a higher authority by the learners, not only from a linguistic but also from a psycho-social point of view, and that consequently, they still fear the possibility of an unfavourable judgement on his part.

The learners had no difficulty in exploiting written texts but when confronted with oral comprehension, they only felt satisfied with a full transcription of the text, considering this the sole means of fully understanding it.

While this is true to a certain extent, the use of a transcription has its pitfalls. A word-for-word transcription is too artificial, and has little direct use in

* In future, groups for practice in oral expression will be organised allowing the students to concentrate on methodology for oral comprehension in autonomy.

real communication situations. Moreover, it leads to unnecessary concentration on insignificant details, which can not only discourage the student, but also obscure the main gist of the text. Great is the students' surprise when they realise that the helper, a native speaker, may even have the same problem, but that while they persist in trying, the helper finds another way round the problem. Even more emphasis will have to be placed on global comprehension in the preparation of stage 1.

One final word should be said about technical problems : as the cassettes could not be prepared in advance, and as there was no rapid copier, there were often unavoidable delays in distribution of materials. Although this was a minor problem because of the small number of learners involved, it could be an important obstacle to working with greater numbers. As this experiment only involved a small number of people, the tentative conclusions we have arrived at will have to be confirmed by results obtained in the years to come on a larger scale.

Though limited in number, these students are, we feel, a representative sample of the general student body at the ENSMIM. For the perfectionists, the advantage of autonomy compared to a regular class is the possibility of fulfilling their own personal needs and goals, without having to conform to a group whose interests and aims may or may not coincide.

Those for whom enjoyment is the prime motivation for learning English find autonomous learning a positive experience. It allows them to avoid the classroom situation, which sometimes proves unpleasant to them. Selecting material suited to their personal tastes demonstrates to them how the responsibility for enjoyable learning can be transferred from the teacher to themselves.

However, where the students were completely unmotivated, autonomy was not a successful solution. All we can do is to inform them of the needs experienced by former graduates of the ENSMIM. We propose then, to gather the results of the previously mentioned questionnaire, and make them available to the students, thereby giving them a clearer idea of their potential needs and making their neglect of English a deliberate choice.

We would also hope for certain changes in the structure of the ENSMIM, which would render English classes optional, so as to eliminate those students who are completely uninterested. In addition, increased or prolonged training periods would condition the students to accept more responsibility for themselves, which would certainly influence their learning abilities.

It is perhaps worth noting that this project is only one of a series of linked experiments in autonomous learning carried out at the ENSMIM ; others have included the establishment of a self-access sound library and of a corpus of letters for the use of learners wishing to improve their standard in correspondence. In general, we have found the type of students at the ENSMIM to be highly amenable to the type of learning strategy provided by these experiments.

IV. GENERAL CONCLUSION

« définir une stratégie pédagogique, c'est nécessairement faire un pari sur l'avenir ».

Y. Châlon

To quote Ronald Gross in his article " after deschooling, free learning " (Illich et al., 1973) : " ... other schemes for placing educational resources in the hands of consumers-learners, rather than institutions are gaining force... theoretical and policy findings are being translated into practive by such initiatives as the Parkway ' school without walls ' in Philadelphia, Sesame Street, the ' growth centers ' on the East and West Coast, Britain's new televised Open University, the Whole Earth Catalogue, the new ' learning communes ', the ' university without walls ' New York State's nonresidential adult college for independent study, and the free school movement. The message of all these is clear : there are beautiful options, finer possibilities, more natural, economical, just, humane, and potent means of education available to us than schooling as we have known it ".

Reconsidering the multitude of activities open to people, and their numerous personal involvements, we can safely assume that the constraints of a specific location and time set aside for that sacred experience called learning, will become more and more unacceptable to them, and force them to seek other solutions. In doing so, they will necessarily be led to re-evaluate the part they play in the learning process. As they become aware of their own possibilities, changes will certainly occur in their expectations of the institutions dispensing courses.

People will begin to value individual, that is uncertified learning outside the classroom, and come to consider the absence of the teacher as a pedagogically satisfying situation, rather than a less desirable substitute. The attitudes they formerly held towards education will thus have to evolve, and this evolution will, in turn, have its repercussions on educational organizations. The very institutions, then, which insist on providing classes endlessly, simply because this is their very raison d'être, will either have to redefine their functions, or become obsolete in the face of individuals interested in putting the resource of their own creative energy to work at learning autonomously. They will no longer seek out the traditional structures that habitually fed them short-lived, convenient learning packages, but will seek, rather, to develop their own methodologies and learning techniques.

While acknowledging the fact that there is still much to be done before this goal can be attained, we have chosen to work towards that ideal, by helping learners not only to acquire the skills in question, but also, to reshape their attitudes and beliefs towards a reaffirmation of the " viability of self-education " (Gross, 1973).

Given our convictions, two of the most pressing tasks ahead lie in the creation of materials adapted to self-directed learning, and in the training of new helpers, whose work will allow these schemes to expand.

That we have found virtually no satisfying commercially-available material designed for truly autonomous learning implies that we must begin, however slowly, to elaborate this type of material ourselves. This will allow us to integrate our belief in the use of authentic materials at all levels (including beginning levels), and recent research into language functions and communicative competence, building these concepts into the materials we develop.

In addition to creating and experimenting new materials, and making a continuous effort to function as a learning resource centre, the C.R.A.P.E.L. will also need to select potential helpers. A non-directive, open atmosphere would certainly be favourable to group reflexions on the characteristics and respective roles of helper and learner in a new educational context.

Emphasis would be placed on changes from the traditional teacher-student power structures in our discussions with helpers. By attempting first to do away with their own academic prejudices, they would be all the more prepared to help the learners overcome these same prejudices (which have been inculcated in so many of the individuals we deal with) and ready to enter into the type of interpersonal relationships which would make the learning experience a meaningful one for all concerned.

RESUME

Cet article présente deux applications de la stratégie d'apprentissage en autonomie définie dans les précédents Mélanges Pédagogiques : l'une à des adultes dans le cadre de la formation permanente, et l'autre à des étudiants d'une grande école, l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Métallurgie et des Industries des Mines (ENSMIM) de Nancy.

Cette stratégie visait à répondre aux besoins en anglais d'adultes ne pouvant pas assister régulièrement à des cours du soir, et à pallier le manque d'intérêt que les étudiants ressentaient pour les cours obligatoires.

Nos objectifs à court terme étaient donc d'amener les apprenants à atteindre à la fois une compétence linguistique et une compétence de communication satisfaisantes, à l'aide de documents adaptés au travail en autonomie et grâce à une relation pédagogique nouvelle avec le conseiller d'apprentissage, qui permette à l'apprenant de prendre confiance en son propre travail, de vaincre ses appréhensions pour le travail en autonomie et de dépendre moins de l'enseignant.

A long terme, nous espérions donner aux apprenants les moyens de prendre en charge leur propre apprentissage : pour qu'ils puissent définir eux-mêmes leurs objectifs, choisir le matériel et les documents appropriés, déterminer leur mode de travail, assumer la responsabilité de leur progression personnelle, et évaluer leur performance en situation réelle.

Nous pensons pouvoir dire que les objectifs immédiats ont été atteints. Quant à la réalisation des objectifs à long terme, il nous est plus difficile de l'apprécier, car cela supposerait que nous gardions le contact avec les autonomes.

Pour le CRAPEL, cette stratégie exige la préparation d'une grande variété de documents oraux ou écrits qui facilitent l'apprentissage en autonomie, et également la disponibilité d'un matériel de reproduction rapide. Il nous faudra choisir et former des conseillers d'apprentissage pour être en mesure d'étendre l'apprentissage en autonomie.

Chez les apprenants, la réussite de cette stratégie repose sur une forte motivation pour atteindre le but précis, et la volonté de se débarrasser des préjugés sur le processus enseignement apprentissage et sur les rôles respectifs du professeur et de l'élève.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

C.R.A.P.E.L. — *Mélanges Pédagogiques*, Université de Nancy-II.

CHALON Y. (1970). « Pour une pédagogie sauvage ».

DUDA, R., ESCH, E., et LAURENS, J.-P. (1972). « Documents non-didactiques et formation en langues ».

CEMBALO, M. et HOLEC, H. (1973). « Les Langues aux adultes : pour une pédagogie de l'autonomie ».

DUDA, R., LAURENS, J.-P., et REMY, S. (1973). « L'exploitation didactique de documents authentiques ».

CEMBALO, M., et GREMMO, M.-J. (1973). « Autonomie de l'apprentissage : réalités et perspectives ».

HARDING, E. et LEGRAS, M. (1974). « La Bibliothèque sonore et ses implications pédagogiques ».

RILEY, P. (1975). « From Fact to Function : Aspects of the Work of the C.R.A.P.E.L. ».

C.R.A.P.E.L. — *Cours*.

Cours d'Anglais Oral pour Débutants, Université de Nancy-II.

Cours Avancé de Compréhension Orale, Université de Nancy-II.

Cours de Compréhension Orale, Longman-Armand Colin.

Cours de Compréhension Ecrite pour Débutants, Université de Nancy-II.

Cours Intensif d'Anglais Oral, Longman-Armand Colin.

HEBRON, M.-E. (1966). *Motivated learning : a developmental study from birth to the senium*, Methuen and Co Ltd.

ILLICH, Y. (1970). *Deschooling Society*, Harper and Row, New York.

ILLICH, Y. et al. (1973). *After Deschooling, What* ? Harper and Row, New York.

KUHN, M. (1974). « L'Elaboration de materiaux didactiques » in *CILT Reports and Papers II : Teaching languages to adults for special purposes*, November 1974.

OSTERRIETH, P.-A. (1965). *Faire des Adultes*, Charles Dessart, Bruxelles.

ROGERS, C. (1972). *Liberté pour apprendre ?* Dunod.

ROGERS, C. (1961). *On becoming a person*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

VERNON, M.-D. (1969). *Human motivation*, Cambridge University Press.